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A
COMPANION
FOR THE
Candidates of Heaven:
Being Two Discourses on *Love*
PRAYER
AND THE
LOVE of GOD.

By WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D. D.
Late Lord Bishop of St. Asaph.

WITH
A PREFACE, containing CHARACTERS
of the Right Reverend the Author and his
Works, by several Eminent Hands. Col-
lected out of the 11th and 12th Vols. for
the Use of those who cannot go to the
Price of the whole.

L O N D O N:
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SECRET

Candidate of History.

1924

RAY RAY

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the whole of those who cannot go to the
price of the whole

There are two windows on the west wall of the
chapel, and a small window on the east wall.
The windows are of the same style as those
in the nave, and are of the same size.
The windows are of the same style as those
in the nave, and are of the same size.

THE PREFACE.

AS it requires a masterly Pen, like his own, to give a just Character of the Works of the great Bishop Beveridge, which indeed to all that seriously peruse them, do far better speak their own Worth, than it is in the Power of any other Words to express: So his excellent Discourses, out of the 11th and 12th Volumes, whereof these are collected, have already so well recommended themselves, and their venerable Author, to the World, in the several Volumes before extant, that it were as needles, as it is difficult, to say any thing farther in the Praise, either of him or them; if we did not live in an Age of Scepticism and Infidelity, where the first Principles of Religion, and the very Being of God, are call'd in question, and the great Learning and Piety even of our incomparable Author and his Writings, are so far from exempting them from Censure, that the sacred Scriptures and the divine Penmen, the holy Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles, and even our Blessed Saviour himself cannot escape the lash of these prophane Libertines. And indeed when we consider, that, what in all good Men begets the greatest value and esteem for this excellent Prelate, and what he wrote, I mean that Spirit of Piety and Simplicity which runs thro' all his Practical Discourses, and that strength of Reasoning, wherewith he demonstrates the great Articles of our Religion, and unanswerably refutes all Gainsayers; when we consider, that these are the true Reasons of that opposition his Writings meet with, and that it is chiefly made by Infidels or Atheists; this at once lessens our Wonder at it, and adds new lustre to his Glory, by attempting to eclipse it. What has been frequently observ'd in commendation of the Christian Religion itself, that as many Enemies as it has always had, yet the best Men have ever been its Friends, and the better they have been, so much

the more they have esteem'd it; that is also true of the Compositions of this great Teacher, and illustrious Pattern of that Religion; as much as they are scoff'd and bark'd at by the Wicked and Prophane, such as can neither comply with the Precepts they enforce, nor bear the Truths they demonstrate, such as are Enemies not only to Bishop Beveridge, but to the whole Order, nor only to the Christian, but to all Religion: yet all holy and good Men do not only admire them for that, which is the true, tho' conceal'd Reason of all this Hatred and Inveteracy against them; but generally commend as the greatest Beauty and Strength, what these ungodly Criticks are not asham'd to Censure in them, as the height of Weakness and Deformity. Nor are they thus admired only by the best Men, but by the best Judges. One of the most eminent Divines, and most celebrated Preachers of this Age, now a great Prelate, speaking in private Conversation of Bishop Beveridge, after he had read his Sermons, express'd himself to this effect, and as well as one that heard him can recollect, in these very Words, "I wonder how it was possible for him to do
 "as he did. The more I read and consider his Sermons, the more I admire them. I see something
 "new in every one of them, that I never saw before.
 "They are calculated to do Good. I wish there
 "were no other Sermons to be preach'd. Tho' I
 "get as much by Preaching as the rest of my Neighbours, yet for the Publick Good I wish it; and if
 "I were to live in the Country, I would Preach no
 "other. A Testimony of it self, capable to bear down all opposition before it, were I at liberty to name the Great Man that gave it. And as to those false Criticks, who pretend to Censure the Stile of our admirable Author; to shew how much their Malice outruns their Judgment, a late judicious Writer, * in a Dissertation upon that very Subject, proposes His, among others, as a Model for forming a just Stile. "With the Bp. of Exeter, says he, and the good

* Felton's Dissertation on reading the Classics, and forming a just Stile, Page 162-3.

The P R E F A C E.

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“ Archbishop, (meaning the late Archbishop of *York*) I must
 “ join the late learned and venerable Bishop of *St. Asaph*,
 “ *Dr. Beveridge*, who has deliver’d himself with those Or-
 “ naments alone, which his Subject suggested to him, and
 “ hath written in that plainness and solemnity of Stile, that
 “ Gravity and Simplicity, which give Authority to the fa-
 “ cred Truths he delivers, and unanswerable evidence to the
 “ Doctrines he defends. There is something so great, pri-
 “ mitive, and apostolical in his Writings, that it creates an
 “ awe and veneration in our Minds: The importance of his
 “ Subjects are above the decorations of Words; and what is
 “ Great and Majestick in itself, looks most like it self the
 “ less it is adorn’d. The true sublime in the great Articles
 “ of our Faith, is lodg’d in the plainest Words. The divine
 “ Revelations are best express’d in the Language they were
 “ reveal’d in; and as I observ’d before of the Scriptures,
 “ they will suffer no ornament or amendment. *A very*
great, and a very just Character this; and yet, to the fur-
ther Confusion of all those who envy our Church and Holy
Religion, the blessed Fruits of this Pious Bishop’s unwearied
Labours, another Writer has given us as great an Elogium
of his Stile, and supported it by a large extract out of that
very Sermon, which has been so much scoff’d at by one,
who sits in the seat of the Scornor, and cannot forbear shew-
ing, that his Malice is conceiv’d against the Doctrine of
that and his other Sermons, tho’ he dare vent it only upon
the manner of expressing it. This Extract is publish’d with
the following Letter from Cambridge.

S I R,

Cambridge, May, 31.

“ **Y**OU having been pleas’d to take Notice of what you
 “ conceiv’d excellent in some of our *English* Divines,
 “ I have presum’d to send a *Specimen*, which, if I am not
 “ mistaken, may, for accuteness of Judgment, ornament
 “ of Speech, and true Sublime, compare with any of the
 “ choicest Writings of the Ancient Fathers, or Doctors of
 “ the Church, who liv’d nearest to the Apostles Times.
 “ The Subject is no less, than that of **GOD** himself;
 “ and the Design, besides doing some Honour to our own
 “ Nation, is to shew, by a fresh Example, to what a height
 “ and strength of Thought a Person may arrive, thro’ a sin-
 “ cere and steady practice of the Christian Religion, I mean
 “ as Taught and Administer’d in the Church of *England*;
 “ which will at the same time prove, that the Force of Spi-

“ritual Assistance is not at all abated by the length of Time,
 “or the iniquity of Mankind ; but that, if Men were not
 “wanting to themselves, and (as our excellent Author
 “speaks) could but be perswaded to conform to our Church’s
 “Rules, they might still live as the primitive Christians
 “did, and come short of none of those eminent Saints for
 “Vertue and Holiness. The Author, *adds he*, from whom
 “this Collection is made, is Bishop Beveridge, Vol. II.
 “Serm. I.

*Whereof he proceeds to give an Extract, for which I
 refer the Reader to the Sermon it self. Our great Pre-
 late’s admirable Talent of moving the Affections and in-
 flaming the Heart, is mention’d with due Praise by the
 same Writer, and exemplified in another Passage of his
 Sermons ; which because it is but short, I shall here set
 down, with the judicious Remark wherewith it is intro-
 duc’d ; and that the rather, because as much as it is here
 admir’d, the Malice of the Bishop’s Enemies has been sa-
 gacious enough to find something in that also to scoff at
 and ridicule. “The other great Writer, says my Author,
 “is particularly useful in his Rapturous Soliloquies, where-
 “in he thinks of the Deity with the highest Admiration,
 “and beholds himself with the most contrite lowliness.
 “My present Business, says he, is to treat of God, his Be-
 “ing and Attributes ; But who is sufficient for these things ?
 “At least, who am I, a silly Worm, that I should take up-
 “on me to speak of him, by whom alone I speak ; and being
 “my self but a finite Creature, should strive to unveil the
 “Nature of the infinite and most holy God ? Alas ! I cannot
 “so much as begin to think of him, but immediately my
 “Thoughts are confounded, my Heart perplexed, my Mind
 “amazed, my Head turns round, my whole Soul seems to
 “be unhinged and overwhelmed within me. His Mercy
 “exalts me ; His Justice depresseth me ; His Wisdom asto-
 “nishes me ; His Power affrights me ; His Glory dazzles
 “mine Eyes ; and by reason of his Holiness, as Job speaks,
 “I cannot endure ; but the least Glimpse of him makes me
 “abhor myself, and repent in Dust and Ashes, before him.
 So happy was the good Bishop in this art of moving and
 gaining upon the Affections, which is the most useful part
 of Preaching, that he is in that regard deservedly rank’d
 with St. Chrysostome himself, the most celebrated Preacher
 among the Ancients, by one that, in the Opinion of the
 best Judges, is himself inferior to few of the Moderns :*
 I mean

The P R E F A C E.

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*I mean the learned Dr. Lupton, who in a Letter *, occasion'd by the Publication of Bishop Bull's Sermons, discoursing with great Judgment concerning the most proper and useful Manner of Preaching, says in the close, " That those therefore who are Censorious enough to reflect with severity upon the pious Strains, which are to be found in St. Chrysostome, Bishop Beveridge, or Bishop Bull, may possibly be good Judges of an Ode or an Essay, but do not seem to criticise justly upon Sermons, or to express a just value for Spiritual Things. And herein the Doctor perfectly agrees with that excellent Person to whom he Writes, whose Judgment in this matter I have reserv'd to the last, as that which, with all that have heard of Mr. Nelson, (and who has not heard of him?) will undoubtedly have the greatest weight; nor could I better conclude this defence of Bishop Beveridge's Sermons, than with a Character of him and them, drawn by a Master, who after many other Testimonies of his great Skill, has of late so distinguish'd, and even outdone himself in the Portrait of another great Prelate, that if this scetch he has given us of our Bishop only in little, were drawn out by him in its just Proportions, and at full length, it were difficult to say, as of one of Raphael's Madonna's, whether the incestimable Piece would be more admir'd for the sake of what it represented, or of the masterly Hand that drew it. But to come to his Character of Bishop Beveridge.*

" And now I have nam'd this great and good Man, (says that learned Gentleman†, speaking of our excellent Bishop) " I cannot forbear acknowledging the favourable dispensation of Providence to the Age in which we live, in blessing it with so many of those Pious Discourses, which this truly primitive Prelate deliver'd from the Pulpit; and I the rather take the liberty to call it a favourable dispensation of Providence, because he gave no Orders himself that they should be Printed; but humbly neglected them, as not being compos'd for the Press. But this Circumstance is so far from abating the worth of the Sermons, or diminishing the Character of the Author, that to me it seems to raise the Excellency of both; because it shews at once the true nature of a popular Discourse, and the great Talent this Prelate had that Way. For to improve the generality of Hearers, they must be

* Letter to Mr. Nelson, *Bishop Bull's Life*, Page 490. &c.

† *Mr. Nelson's Life of Bishop Bull*, Page 75.

"taught

“taught all the Mysteries of Christianity, and the holy In-
 “stitutions belonging to it; since it is upon this true Foun-
 “dation, that the practice of Christian Vertues must be
 “built, to make them acceptable in the Sight of God.
 “And then, all this must be deliver’d to the People in so
 “plain and intelligible a Stile, that they may easily com-
 “prehend it; and it must be address’d to them in so affe-
 “cting and moving a Manner, that their Passions may be
 “winged to a vigorous Prosecution of what is Taught. If
 “I mistake not, the Sermons of this learned *Bishop* answer
 “this Character; and I am confirm’d in this Opinion by
 “the Judgment of those, who are allow’d to have the
 “greatest Talents for the Pulpit, as well as for other parts
 “of Learning. He had a Way of gaining People’s Hearts,
 “and touching their Consciences, which bore some Resem-
 “blance to the Apostolick Age; and when it shall appear,
 “that those bright Preachers, who have been ready to throw
 “contempt upon His *Lordship*’s Performances, can set forth
 “as large a List of Persons, whom they have converted by
 “their Preaching, as I could produce of those, who owed
 “the change of their Lives, under God, to the Instructions
 “of this pious Prelate; I shall readily own that they are
 “superior to His *Lordship* in the Pulpit. Tho’ considering
 “what learned Works he publish’d in the Cause of Religi-
 “on, and what an eminent Patern he was of true primitive
 “Piety, I am not inclined to think, that His *Lordship* will,
 “upon the whole of his Character, be easily equalled by
 “any one.

*I shall detain the Reader no longer from the perusal of
 these excellent Sermons, than only to observe, that as from
 the preceding account of them, they may deservedly be
 recommended to young Clergymen, as a Model to preach
 after; for which purpose the several Indexes added to his
 last Volume, will be of great Use; so the Bishop’s Thesaurus
 Theologicus, or summary of practical Divinity in four
 Volumes, being what I have been told the learned Author
 often made use of himself, as Heads to preach upon, and
 what may be certainly employ’d that Way to very excellent
 purpose, I thought this recommendation of his great ex-
 ample to all young Preachers, would be lame and imper-
 fect, if I did not also mention and recommend that most
 useful Work, which in the Opinion of some, that have care-
 fully compar’d the Texts therein explain’d with the Ori-
 ginal, shews the learned Author to have been also one of the
 best Textuaries of his Time.*



O F

PRAYER.

A C T S X. 4.

*And he said unto him, thy Prayers and
thine Alms are come up for a Memorial
before God.*

OF all the Arts and Sciences which it is possible for any one to learn, there is none like that of doing Good, the Art of refining all our Actions into Good Works, which there is never a Soul amongst us, but by Nature is capable of, and by Christ may attain unto, if ye would but seriously set your selves about it; for the Scriptures do clearly discover to you the several Qualifications which are necessarily required to the making of any Action good: All which may briefly be reduced to these Heads; That whatsoever we do be agreeable to the revealed Will of God, at least no way forbidden by it, or contrary to what is commanded in it; and then that we do not only what God commands, but therefore do it because God commands it; that all our Actions proceed from a Principle of Obedience to the supreme Governour of the World. And as what we do must be according to God's Will, so we must do it

it with our own Wills too, still observing *David's* Rule, to serve the Lord with a *perfect Heart*, and a *willing Mind*, so as to do every Thing we set upon, with all our Hearts, yea, and with all our Might and Mind, so as to make God's Glory the ultimate End of all our Actions, and not to intend any thing of carnal Pleasure, Profit, or Applause in doing of them, neither to Pride ourselves in them when done; but when we have done all, *still to account ourselves but as unprofitable Servants*, and therefore rely and depend only upon the Merit of Jesus Christ, for the acceptance of what we do in the sight of God, humbly confiding, that in and through Christ, God will pardon the manifold Imperfections of our best Performances, and accept of our sincere, tho' weak Endeavours. And if we thus do what we can, altho' our Actions be not so perfectly Good as the Law of God requires, God for Christ's sake will accept of what we do as Good, by reason of that perfect, extraordinary, and divine Obedience, which his own Son, for our sakes, performed unto him. By this means therefore we may do Good Works, such as are and will be acceptable unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And, verily, if we mind either our present Interest, or the eternal Concerns of our Immortal Souls, we must endeavour, unto the utmost of our Power thus to *do Good*; without which it is impossible for us ever to be happy, either in this Life or that which is to come; for unless we be and do Good, whatsoever Earthly Riches we may fancy ourselves to have, we are really but poor and empty Creatures, destitute of every thing that is truly good for us. Whatsoever sensual Pleasures we may have to gratify our Flesh, we are altogether strangers to all true Joy and Happiness. Whatsoever worldly Honours may be conferred upon us, we are still but vile and despicable Sinners; we may please ourselves with the
Con-

Conceit of our Cunning and Subtilty, but we are still meer Naturals, no better than Fools and Madmen in God's account. And whatsoever Friends we may have on Earth, be sure we have none in Heaven. Whatsoever outward Peace we may enjoy, we can have none either with God or our own Consciences. And tho' we may rub on for a while, we are continually subject both to temporal and eternal Death, to have our Souls separated from our Bodies, and both Soul and Body separated from God and Goodness. Whereas, on the other side, if we really be, and sincerely endeavour always to do Good, nothing really Evil can befall us, nothing truly Good will be withholden from us; we may have no Earthly, but as for Heavenly and Everlasting Riches we shall have them in abundance; we may have nothing to please our Senses, but all things imaginable to satisfy and delight our Souls; we may be despised by Men, but we shall be honoured by Saints and Angels, yea, by God himself, who is the only Fountain of all true Honour. At present we may be reckoned Fools and Ideots, but at long run, we shall be acknowledged by all to be the Wisest of Men; all about us may be our Enemies, but we shall have two good Friends which will always stand by us, God above, and our own Consciences within us, with which we shall always be at Peace, whatsoever Bustles or Tumults happen in the World, and how long or short soever our Lives be upon Earth, we are sure to live for evermore in Heaven; so that if you be either covetous of lasting Riches, desirous of satisfying Pleasures, or ambitious of real Honours, if you would be either instructed in true Wisdom, beloved of faithful Friends, blessed with inward Peace, or advanced to eternal Life, do Good, and your Desires shall be all fulfilled; yea, you will most certainly have infinitely more than as yet it is possible for you to imagine, or, by consequence, to desire.

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Now

Now these Things being duly and truly weigh'd, I hope you are all resolv'd, by the Assistance and Blessing of the most High God, to be always doing good for the future, unto the utmost of your Power, wherein I shall endeavour, as God shall enable me, to be farther assistant to you; and for that end, having shewn you how to do Good in general, for your better understanding the nature and practice of Good Works, I shall explain unto you some of those particular Acts wherein you are all bound in a more especial manner to be always doing Good; whereof you have two mentioned in my Text, with a particular Approbation of God himself; and they are Prayers and Alms, which are here recorded in a peculiar manner to be had in remembrance before God, and he said unto him, *Thy Prayers, &c.*

For the opening of which Words, we must know, that in our Saviour and his Apostles Time, and a long while after, *Palestine* or *Judæa* was subject to the *Roman* Empire, and therefore was governed by a President sent from *Rome*, who resided at *Cæsarea*, at that Time the Metropolis of *Judæa*, formerly called *Στρατωνος πόλις*; but when *Herod* had enlarged and adorned it, in Honour of *Cæsar* Emperor of *Rome*, he named it *Cæsarea*, it was about Sixty Miles from *Hierusalem*. The *Roman* President keeping his Court here, he had several Soldiers under his Command, and over every Hundred Soldiers there was a Captain, who was therefore called *Centurio*, the Commander of an Hundred; and amongst others, there was one *Cornelius* a Centurion or Captain in the Apostles Days, about Three or Four Years after our Saviour's Ascension into Heaven. This *Cornelius*, Centurion, or Captain of the *Italian* Band at *Cæsarea*, altho' by Birth he was a *Gentile*, yet by his frequent conversing with the *Jews* in *Palestine*, he attained to the Knowledge of the true God, the Creator and Governour of the World, as many at that

that time did besides him, and so he became a Profelite. But we must know there were two sorts of Profelites amongst the *Jews*, some were called, *גרי צדק*, Profelites of Righteousness, and Profelites of the Covenant, those embraced the whole Mosaick Dispensation, they were Circumcised, Offered and Sacrificed as the *Jews* did, and in every thing enjoyed the same Privileges, as if they had been born *Jews*; the other were *גרים וישראלים*, *Profelyti inquilini*, these were not Circumcised, nor bound to observe the Ceremonial Law, but only the more necessary Points of the Moral Law, as to avoid Idolatry, but to Worship only the true God, not to commit Fornication, Murder, nor Robbery, but to be Just and to abstain from Things Strangled, which were called the Seven Precepts given to *Noah*, as *Maimonides* a Jewish Writer asserts. Now such a kind of Profelite was *Cornelius*, and many others in those Times, and are often mentioned in the *Acts* of the Apostles, under the Name of *Σεβουοι*, Devout Men, or Worshippers of the true God, as *Acts* 17. 4. *Acts* 13. 43. *Acts* 16. 14.

Cornelius therefore, although he was no such Jewish Profelite as to be Circumcised, and observe all the Rites and Ceremonies of the Mosaick Law, and therefore was reputed by the *Jews*, but as a *Gentile* and Unclean; yet notwithstanding he was so far instructed in the Knowledge of the true God, that he had not only renounced his former Idolatry wherein he was bred and born, but he lived up too unto the Light which he had received, constantly and conscientiously performing his Devotions to Almighty God, to the utmost of his Knowledge and Power, and expressing his Piety towards God, by his Charity to the Poor, as is here expressly asserted, *v.* 1, 2. And it is very probable, that there being now a new Religion started in the World, wherein the true God was Worshipped as well as in the

Jewish, he made it his daily Prayer and Request to Almighty God, to be instructed in the right way, and directed to that Religion wherein he might attain to everlasting Salvation. And although he certainly could neither Pray nor do any good Work, as yet, as he ought to do it, yet doing it as well as he could, God, that never fails them that do what they can, was pleased to have so much Mercy upon him, as to send an Angel on purpose from Heaven, to direct him to one of Christ's Disciples, *Peter* by Name, who should tell him what he must further do. It is true, God might have given the Angel Commission to have told him himself, that he must believe in Jesus Christ that was crucified at *Hierusalem* a little while before, but there being Ministers settled upon Earth for that purpose, God chose rather to send him to one of them, to teach all after Ages, that they must not now expect Revelations from Heaven, to be directed in their Way thither, but should apply themselves to the Ministry for that end.

The Angel that was sent, came to *Cornelius* at the Ninth Hour of the Day, that is, at Three a Clock in the Afternoon, at which time *Cornelius* was at his Devotions, *Acts* 10. 30. that being anciently an Hour of Prayer. *Cornelius* being startled, as well he might, at the sight of so glorious a Person, the Angel addresses himself unto him in this gracious and comfortable Language, *Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up as a Memorial before God. And now send Men to Joppa, &c.* v. 5, 6. Where we may observe how punctual the Angel was in describing the Person he was to send for, by the City where he lodged, *Joppa*; by both his Names, *Simon* and *Peter*; by his Name where he lodged, *Simon*; by his Landlord's Calling, he was a Tanner; and by the Situation of his House, it was by the Seaside; and all, to shew how accurate we should be

in matters of Religion, and in whatsoever concerns our eternal Happiness, as the Angel here was in directing *Cornelius* to *St. Peter*, describing him by all these Circumstances, lest he should be mistaken in the Man, and so fail in his Expectations from him; which were to know what he should further do. *He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.* From whence it is plain, that notwithstanding the extraordinary Piety and Devotion of *Cornelius*, who was certainly as great a Moralist as ever lived, yet he had something still to do, which as yet he did not know of, without which he could never get to Heaven; he must send to *Simon Peter* to be instructed in the Faith of Christ, which doubtless is as clear a Demonstration as possibly can be desired, that all the Devotion and good Works imaginable can never bring us to Heaven without Christ, *Acts 4. 12.* And therefore although it be indispensably necessary that we do Good Works, yet we must not trust on them, but only on Christ for Happiness and Salvation.

But now for the Excellency and Necessity of Good Works, as likewise their acceptableness unto God, we have here a very remarkable instance in the first Words of the Angel's Message to *Cornelius*, *Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up for a Memorial before God, or are had in remembrance in the sight of God*, as it is expressed, *v. 13.* that is, God hath taken special Notice of them all along, and still keeps them in his Mind, so as graciously to reward thee for them. From whence it is obvious to observe, how acceptable Prayers and Alms are unto Almighty God, and how well pleased he is with them, and how graciously he was pleased to reward *Cornelius* for them, by directing him to the Way that leads to everlasting Life, yea, and to send an Angel from Heaven on purpose to do it; whereby *Cornelius* was not only very highly honoured, by having
an

an Angel to wait upon him, and to bring this blessed Message to him, but he was likewise thereby fully assured of God's special Grace and Mercy to him, and was so fully instructed in the Way to Happiness, that he is doubtless now a glorified Saint in Heaven. So that although his Prayers and Alms could not bring him to Heaven alone, they it seems were the occasion of his being directed in the Way thither, as the Angel intimates to him in these Words, *Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up for a Memorial before God.*

Seeing therefore we all, I hope, are desirous to do such Works as are acceptable to him that made us, and nothing being more plain than that Prayers and Alms are so, I shall endeavour to search more narrowly into the true Nature of them, that we may all understand how to perform them, so that *our Prayers and Alms too, may go up for a Memorial before God*, as the Angel here says *Cornelius's* did.

To begin therefore with Prayer, a Duty continually incumbent upon us, and therefore the more necessary to be rightly understood by us. And that ye may clearly apprehend whatsoever is necessary to be known concerning it, I shall shew,

- 1st. The Nature of it in general.
- 2^{dly}. The Reasons why it is so acceptable unto God.
- 3^{dly}. The manner how we may so perform it, that God may accept of it.

As for the *First*, The Nature of Prayer in general, it is rightly defined by *Damascen*, to be, 'Ανάβασις νῦν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον, the ascent of the Mind to God. When the Soul lays aside the Thoughts of all Things else, and converses only with God, then it is properly said to Pray; so that as in Hearing, God speaks to

us, so in Praying we speak to God. So that Prayer hath an immediate reference to God himself, the Soul at such a time applying itself only unto God. And all that we ought to think or speak in Prayer may be reduced to these general Heads, Confession, Petition, and Thanksgiving.

For the First, When we speak to so glorious a Majesty as God is, we ought in the first Place to acknowledge and confess our own unworthiness to appear before him, or to receive any Mercy from him, by reason of the manifold and great Transgressions that we have committed against him. Thus *Ezra* in his Prayer to God, made an humble confession of his own and his Peoples Sins, *Ezra* 9. 6, 7. Thus *David* Prayed, *Psal.* 51. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. and *Daniel*, *cap.* 9. 3, 4, 5, &c. And that this Prayer of *Daniel* was very acceptable unto God, is plain, in that it was no sooner got to Heaven, but an Angel was immediately dispatched from thence, to certifye *Daniel* that he was a Person greatly beloved, and to acquaint him how his Prayer was heard, *v.* 20, 21, 22, 23. And certainly nothing is more reasonable in itself, nor more acceptable to God, than to confess our Sins every time we go to him, against whom they were committed.

And as we are to confess our Sins unto him, so are we to beg for Mercy from him; which is that part of Prayer we call Petition, so great a part, that it is ordinarily put for the whole. And the Prayer which our blessed Saviour himself composed and stamped with divine Authority, consisteth mostly of Petitions or Requests put up to our Father which is in Heaven. Neither is there any thing whatsoever that is truly Good for us, but if we want it, we may and ought to ask it of God, who is not only the chiefest Good in himself, but the only Fountain of all Good to his Creatures; so that whatsoever it is that we want, we are still to go to him
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for it, whether it be for our Souls or Bodies, for this Life or that which is to come ; and that either for our selves or others, *Tim. 2. 1; 2.* yea, for our very Enemies, *Matt. 5. 44.*

And as we must desire of God what we want, so must we praise him for what we have, not only by giving him formal Thanks for such or such Mercies which he hath bestowed upon us, but especially by magnifying and extolling his great and all-glorious Name, by confessing and acknowledging him to be the supreme possessor and disposer of all Things, that every good and perfect Gift comes from him that is above. Hence in the *Hebrew*, the usual Word for Thanksgiving is *תודה*, which properly signifies Confession, because the Thanks we give to God for the Mercies we have received from him, consists Principally, in confessing that it is from him alone that we have received them. And this is the only way likewise whereby it is possible for us to praise God, even by acknowledging him to be what he is, a God infinitely Great and Glorious in himself, infinitely Good and Gracious in his Son to all that Love and Fear him. Hence the same *Hebrew* Word that signifies to Confess, when it is referred to God, it properly signifies to Praise him ; as where it is said, *Oh that Men would Praise the Lord for his Goodness*, *Psal. 107. 8.* In the *Hebrew* it is *וּלְהוֹדוֹת לַיהוָה רַחֲמָיו*, *Oh that Men would confess to the Lord his Goodness* ; That is, confess him to be Good, and wonderful in his dealings to Mankind. Thus the divine Hymn composed by *St. Ambrose* begins with the proper notion of Praise, *We Praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord* ; that is, we Praise thee, by acknowledging that thou art the Lord, the supream Being and Governour of the whole World. And verily this is so necessary a part of Prayer, that our blessed Saviour hath taught us both to begin and end our daily Prayers with it, beginning

ginning with *Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name, and then ending with, for thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Now, if we take Prayer in this general Sense, as it comprehends these several Ways of addressing our selves to the Most High God, we must needs conclude it to be a thing very acceptable and well-pleasing to him, and that, which if rightly Performed, he takes Pleasure and Delight in, as the Wise Man tells us, *The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord, but the Prayer of the Upright is his Delight*, Prov. 15. 8. which also appears in that he hath made this the only means whereby to obtain any Mercy at his Hands. And if you would know the Reasons wherefore Prayer is so acceptable unto God, I think they may be reduced to these Heads briefly.

First, In Praying, we come as near as we can to the principal end of our Creation, which was to converse and enjoy communion with God, and to praise and extol his Name. God was infinitely happy from all Eternity in the enjoyment of his own Perfections, howsoever of his infinite Goodness he was pleased to make the World, and amongst other Creatures to make Man, and that in his own Image and Similitude, on purpose that he might know, admire, and praise his Maker. He did not intend that you should spend your Time in getting Estates, gratifying your Flesh, or aspiring after the impertinent Applause of Men, but that you should be always adoring and extolling him; and therefore so long as you are doing any Thing else, you do as much as in you lies to frustrate the end of your Creation; but whilst you are praying and praising God, you do the Work which you were made and at first designed for; and therefore it cannot but be a Matter very acceptable to God, be-
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cause you endeavour at least to fullfil his end in creating of you.

Secondly, Hereby also you acknowledge his supremacy over, and propriety in the World, by paying your daily homage and tribute of Thanks to him, for the Blessings which you do enjoy, and by applying your selves to him only for the obtaining of those you want. Such as are not constant and conscientious in the performance of this Duty, live as without God in the World, as if they had no dependance upon him, nor were beholden to him for what they have, and so forget in what Tenure they hold their Estates, and what they do enjoy, or at least they do not acknowledge it; whereas by your daily praying to him for what you want, and praising him for what you have, you testify your acknowledgment, that you are but Tenants at will, and that he is the universal Landlord, the supream Proprietor of all Things, and so that you hold your Estates only under him, and by consequence, that they are still at his disposal, and that you are bound to employ them only in his Service, and according to his Pleasure and Command, which cannot but be very acceptable to him.

Especially considering, in the last place, That hereby you give him the Glory due unto his Name, which is the ultimate end of his, and ought to be of all our Actions, *Who so offereth Praise, saith God, glorifieth me*, Psal. 50. 23. And so whosoever Prays too doth the same; for hereby you do not only acknowledge his Dominion over the World, and his Propriety in all things in it, *that the Earth is the Lords, and the fullness thereof*, Psal. 24. 1. but hereby you acknowledge likewise his Omnipresence, that he is always present with you; his Omniscience, that he always knows and hears what you say unto him; his All-sufficiency, that he is able to supply you; and his infinite Grace and Mercy, in that he

is willing to help and succour you. And now, as God is well-pleased with himself, and takes infinite delight in the Contemplation of his own divine Perfections, so he cannot but be well pleased likewise with having his Perfections thus acknowledged and adored by his Creatures, and in a particular manner by Men, whom he was pleased to make for that only purpose to glorify him; and therefore he hath so composed our Natures that it is our happiness as well as Duty to do it, so that it will be our constant Work in Heaven, as it ought to be upon Earth.

It is no question therefore but that Prayer duly performed, is a Duty very acceptable unto God. But the great Question is, how you and I may so perform it that it may be acceptable to him, *that our Prayers may go up, as Cornelius's did, for a memorial before God?* For howsoever acceptable Prayer be in itself unto him, we must not think that he is well pleased with every Thing that goes under the Name of Prayer amongst us, which I think was never so much abused before, as it hath been and still is in our Age; for some do nothing but mutter over a Company of hard Words in an unknown Tongue, and though they understand not what themselves say, yet they are not ashamed to call this Praying; others make a long Oration, seemingly directed to the Great God, of what comes next to their Tongues end, and this without any more ado, they call by the sacred Name of Prayer; others if they do but read or run over a parcel of Words and Phrases, or hear them read, especially if they do it with some outward shew of Reverence and Devotion, they presently conclude that they have been at Prayers, yea, that themselves have done this acceptable Work to God. Whereas, alas, there is nothing of all this but a Man may do, and yet not Pray at all. For Prayer is certainly the

greatest Work that it is possible for Creatures to be engaged in; and therefore to the due performance of it, there must needs be required the highest intent of the Mind, the greatest composure of the Thoughts, seriousness of the Will, and ardency of Affections, as well as the most solemn Expressions of Reverence and Humility imaginable. So that it must needs be the hardest as well as the highest Work that we can ever be employed about; neither can it ever be rightly performed, without a great deal of Care, Study and Pains about it. For as there is a great Mystery in doing Well in general, so is there in Praying in particular, which is an Art no less difficult in itself, than it is advantageous to those that learn and practice it. And therefore Prayer is not to be slighted, or carried on in a careless and perfunctory Manner; but as it is the best and most acceptable Duty that we can perform, so is it to be performed with the greatest Seriousness and Devotion that we can possibly raise up our Spirits to; otherwise, howsoever acceptable it be in itself, it will not be accepted from us.

Wherefore hoping, that as you desire to go to Heaven in good earnest, so you desire also to perform this as well as all other Religious Duties in good earnest too, and not to content yourselves with such a formal and customary way of Praying as others, and perhaps yourselves too, hitherto have done, I shall endeavour to give you some light and insight into the true Nature of it at this time, and shew you how you may all perform it acceptably to the living God; for as it is my desire that every Soul here present may e'relong be advanced to eternal Glory, so it must be my Care and Study to inform your Judgments aright concerning the true Nature of such Duties as are necessary in order to it, whereof this is one of the first and greatest. And therefore I shall not put you off with any vain
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and impertinent Discourse upon so high and divine a Subject as this is, but shall endeavour to show you in a plain and familiar Way, what is of absolute necessity to the due performance of it. And because I would not burden your Memories too much, I shall reduce it all to these three Heads, What you are to do before, in, and after Prayer, that it may be acceptable unto God, and profitable for yourselves; of which very briefly.

First therefore, you must know that Prayer is a Duty of that extraordinary weight and moment, that it is not to be undertaken Hand over Head, without a due and solemn Preparation of your selves beforehand. If you were to speak but to an earthly Prince, none of you but would consider beforehand what to speak, and how to carry yourselves before him; how much more when you go to the universal Monarch of the World, the supream Governour and Possessor of Heaven and Earth, whose Glory and Majesty did you but rightly apprehend, I am confident never a one of you durst have the boldness to speak unto him, without a serious Consideration beforehand what to ask, and how to deport yourselves before him, but you would take Pains with yourselves to bring your Hearts into a fit Temper and Disposition for so great a Work; which that you may do, I desire you to observe only these three Rules.

First, Lay aside all earthly and carnal Thoughts, otherwise it will be impossible for you to perform so heavenly and spiritual a Duty as this is; and therefore so soon as ever you set yourselves about either publick or private Prayer, you must be sure to bid the World adieu, and not suffer your Estates, your Credit, your Relations, nor any thing here below to molest or distract you in the performing of so solemn a Duty as this is.

Secondly,

Secondly, Bethink yourselves beforehand what Mercies you want, for which you should Pray unto him, and what you have, for which you must Praise God, as also how unworthy you are, either to retain what you have, or to receive what you want. Consider how sinful you are by Nature, and how sinful you have been by Practice, so as to be vile and base in your own Eyes, when you appear before so pure and glorious a Being as the Great God is, otherwise you can neither acknowledge rightly your former Sins, nor beg Mercy and Grace as you ought to do, nor indeed are you fully qualified for the receipt of any Blessing whatsoever, no, nor for the asking of it.

Thirdly, Get your Hearts possessed beforehand with a due sense of God's transcendent Excellency, Greatness, and Glory. Consider with yourselves that you are now going to speak to him by whom alone you Speak; that you are now to converse with the universal Being of the whole World, with him that is the only Fountain of all Life and Motion, with him who with a Word of his Mouth commanded thee out of nothing, and with a Frown of his Countenance can send thee into Hell; with him that can do what he will, and will do what he can for them that truly serve him; and let such Considerations as these are, fill your Hearts with awful and reverential Apprehensions of him, and then you will be in a fit frame to appear before him, and to put up your Petitions to him.

Having thus prepared yourselves and brought your Hearts into a fit Temper, you may set upon the Work itself, and present yourselves before the eternal God, and your Requests unto him: wherein I desire you to observe these few Directions. At first, all the while you are Praying, still remember what you are doing, and carry yourselves accordingly, even with that lowliness and humility, that
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reverence and solemnity, as becometh poor sinful Creatures, whilst you are Praying to the great Creator of the World. Thus the Apostle tells you, that if you would serve God acceptably, you must do it with *reverence and godly fear*, Heb. 12. 28. and the Reason is, because our God is a consuming Fire, ver. 29. And therefore let others sit as confidently, and speak as malapertly as they please to the Great God, they must answer for it another Day; but if you desire to pray acceptably, you must do it with that inward awe and dread upon your Spirits, and with all those outward Expressions of reverence and godly Fear, that may testify your acknowledgment of God's infinite Greatness and Authority over you, and your own Vileness and Unworthiness before him. Hence also,

Secondly, Be sure to observe the Wise Man's Counsel in all your Addresses to the most High God, *Be not rash with thy Mouth, and let not thine Heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth, therefore let thy Words be few*, Eccles. 5. 2. God is in Heaven, he is a great, an infinite, an eternal, an all-glorious and incomprehensible Being, Heaven is his Throne and Earth his Footstool, thou art a poor silly Worm, a little creeping, crawling, sinful Dust and Ashes, and therefore have a care what thou sayest unto him, and fear to speak any thing amiss before him, As *Abraham*, when he had been importunate with God for the saving of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* from Destruction, *Behold now*, saith he, *I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but Dust and Ashes. Ob let not the Lord be angry and I will speak but this once*, Gen. 18. 27, 32. so careful should we be of what we speak to God, so fearful of speaking any thing mis-timely before him; for if we do, instead of accepting or answering our Prayers, he will be angry and displeased with us for them. And there-
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fore whatsoever Liberty others take unto themselves, do you remember always the distance betwixt God and you, and keep within your Bounds; be not hasty to utter any thing before so great a Majesty as he is.

Thirdly, Have a great Care to keep your Thoughts and Affections together all the while that you are performing your Devotions, as your Tongues should not, so neither should your Hearts run before your Heads, nor your Affections before your Apprehensions in Prayer; but the whole Man, both Soul and Body, should be jointly engaged in the performance of it, yea, and both the Faculties of the Soul too; the Understanding with its Apprehensions, and the Will with its Affections. How Zealous soever or Affectionate you may seem in Prayer, unless your Zeal be governed and regulated by your Understanding, unless there be light as well as heat, it is but a blind kind of Devotion, and therefore we must be sure to follow the Apostle's Rule, *I will pray with my Spirit, and I will pray with my Understanding also*, 1 Cor. 14. 15. that is, we must keep our Minds intent all the while upon the Work we are doing, and our Souls sensible of the greatness of that God we are praying to, the necessity of the Mercies which we desire, our own unworthiness to receive them, and the like. By this means we shall perform a reasonable Service unto God, and if it be not reasonable, I am sure it can be no acceptable Service to him.

Lastly, Pray in Faith, desiring nothing but only in the Name of Christ, for so runs the Promise, *whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*, John 16. 23. Indeed we have no other ground to expect any Mercy at God's Hands, but only upon the account of Christ, and therefore he that goes in his own Name, or trusting in his own Righteousness, may justly expect a Curse rather than

than a Blessing upon what he doth; so that if you would Pray to purpose, you must be sure to keep your Faith firm all the while, and stedfastly fixed upon Christ, apprehending and believing him to be your Advocate in Heaven, presenting your Prayers to the divine Majesty, with the Incense of his own Merit and Mediation, never expecting to be heard or accepted upon any other account, but only for Christ Jesus's sake, but humbly confiding, that for his sake the eternal God will pardon the Sins which you confess before him, grant the Petitions which you present unto him, and accept of that Praise and Thanksgiving which you offer him. These therefore are the most material Things, which I look upon as necessary to the due performance of this Duty, and which I would advise you to have an especial care of in every Prayer you make, even that you always Pray with reverence and godly Fear, that you be not hasty to utter any thing before God, let thy Thoughts and Affections always go together, and thy Faith be continually fixed upon Christ; do but these Things, and you need not fear but your Prayers will be accepted and answered, so far as what you ask is truly good for you. And therefore these are the Things which I would have you principally observe in Prayer, without troubling your Heads, about the unnecessary Circumstances of it, as whether your Prayer be long or short, whether you read it, or say it without Book; for such Things as these are not at all of the Essence of Prayer. The humble *Publican* certainly prayed as much, in crying only, *God be merciful to me a Sinner*, as if he had prayed a whole Hour together; for Prayer doth not at all consist in a multitude of Words, but in the Attention of the Mind, and the sincere desires of the Soul. And whether you read or rehearse a Prayer, whether you say it extempore or by premeditation, it is the

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same Thing, if these the necessary Qualifications do but concur in it. Though this I must say, and your own Experience may teach the same, that it is far easier to Pray the Prayer which we know beforehand, than that which we do not know. For if I know not beforehand what to Pray for next, I must either study my self what to say, or else hearken to what another will say next, and so the Time which I should spend in raising my Affections, and acting my Faith in Prayer, will be wholly taken up in studying or hearkening, and so there will be little or nothing of Prayer in it. Whereas if I understand all along what I shall next Pray for, I shall have nothing else to do but to Pray, that is, to raise up my Soul to God, and to order my Affections suitably to the Matter I am upon. As I should more fully demonstrate, but that your own Experience, I suppose, will save me that Labour.

These things therefore being observed in the body of your Prayers, the last Thing to be considered, is what you must do after Prayer, that it may be accepted and answered; for which you must know, First, That when you have done your Prayers you must not think that you have done with them, but when you have done praying, you are then to recollect your selves, and consider what Sins you have acknowledged, that so for the future you may avoid them; and what Mercies you have begged, that so you may expect them. For it is certainly one of the most ridiculous Customs imaginable, crept in, I know not how, amongst us, to put up several Petitions to the most high God, and never to regard whether he answer them or no: For this is the way surely never to be answered indeed. For if we do not matter whether God answer us or no, we cannot expect he should. And then Secondly, You must not only consider what you have
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prayed for, but you must trust in Christ for the acceptance and answer of your Prayers. And verily there is much more in this than People generally are aware of. For our Saviour himself saith, *what things soever you desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*, Mark 11. 24. And the Apostle intimates the same, *James* 1. 5, 6. And therefore the great Work to be done after Prayer, is firmly to believe that God, for Christ's sake, will accept of our sincere, though weak endeavours, as also that he will grant our requests so far as they are really for his Glory and our own Good. And whosoever observes these several Rules before, in, and after his praying, his Prayers will doubtless go up *as a memorial before God*.

These things therefore being duly considered, I suppose you'll all grant Prayer not to be so easy a Duty, as it is commonly thought to be. I confess was there no more required to it, but to say, or read, or hear a company of Words uttered by another, any one that could either read, or speak, or hear, might Pray too. Or if a large harangue of Phrases and Expressions heaped together was Praying, any one that hath but a voluble Tongue, and a good stock of Confidence, Impudence I mean, to speak what he pleaseth to the great God, might Pray well enough; but seeing nothing less than the whole Soul is to be employed about it, and it consists not in Words and Expressions, but in our Minds and Affections, so as to have them wholly taken up with divine Affairs, in the Performance of this Duty, we must needs acknowledge, that to us especially, who at the best are but sinful Creatures, it is an hard and difficult Work indeed. But howsoever hard it is, it is worth your while to learn and practise it, as you will all confess, if you will but seriously consider these following Particulars.

First, That such solemn Addresses to the most High God, as I have been now describing, will in a little while strangely refine and enlarge your Conceptions of him, and so you will every Day be more and more acquainted with him, and in and thro' Christ ingratiate yourselves with him, and by degrees be able to enjoy Peace and Happiness in him, and inure yourselves to a full and perfect Enjoyment of him in another World. *Acquaint now thyself with him and be at Peace, thereby good shall come unto thee*, said Eliphaz to Job, Job 22. 21. As we see by ourselves, who keeping a Correspondence, and frequently Conversing and Discoursing together, by that means we come to be acquainted with one another. In like manner, by often Praying and Conversing with God in so serious a manner as this is, we shall soon become better acquainted with him, and the Thoughts of him will not be so strange unto us as they were wont to be.

Secondly, This would also be an excellent means to keep our Hearts in a continual awe and fear of him, that we shall not dare to do any thing that we know will be offensive to him; and it would enflame our Hearts also with Love and Affection to him, and with ardent desires after the full Enjoyment of him; for the oftner we pray thus unto him, the better we shall be acquainted with him, and the better we are acquainted with him, by so much we shall the more clearly discover his transcendent Beauty, and enamouring Perfections, which will soon transport our Souls into flames of Love unto him, and, by consequence, it will deaden our Affections unto all things else, that we shall not lie doting any longer upon such poor and pitiful things as this World presents unto us. Yea, by this means our Conversations would be in Heaven, and we should participate in some measure with the glorified Saints and Angels in their Celestial Joys, and should

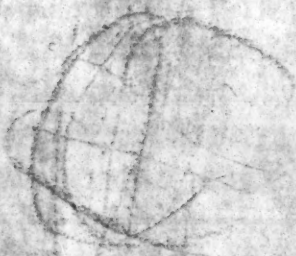
should begin that Work in Time, which we hope to continue for ever, even Praising, Adoring, and Enjoying him that made us. So that this is the way to have Heaven upon Earth, and to have some foretastes of the Grapes of *Canaan*, whilst we are in the Wilderness of this World, before we get a full Meal of them.

Thirdly, Consider also that Prayer is the most powerful and effectual Means in the World to prevent all Evil, and to obtain whatsoever is truly Good for us. By this your Fears may be all dispelled, your Doubts resolved, your Dangers prevented, your Wants supplied, your Enjoyments blessed, and your Souls adorned with all true Grace and Glory. For what is it that Prayer hath not done? What Blessing can it not obtain? It can dissolve the very Flints into Floods of Water, as *Moses's* did. It can shut Heaven and open it again, as *Elijah's* did. It can make the Sun and Moon stand still, as *Joshua's* did. It can raise the Dead to Life, as the Prophet *Elisha's* did. It can stop the Mouths of Lyons, as *Daniel's* did. It can suspend the Fury of the most raging Flames, as the Three Childrens did. It can make a Fish to ship us safe to Land in its own Belly, as *Jonah's* did. It can obtain Children, as *Hannah's* did. It can conciliate the Favour of Princes to us, as *Nebemiah's* did. If we lack Wisdom, by Prayer we may get it, *Jac. 1. 5.* If we be Sick, by Prayer we may be recovered, *Jac. 5. 15.* If our Sins be many and great, by Prayer we may have them pardoned: *I said I would confess my Transgressions to the Lord, said David, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my Sin; for this, shall every one that is godly, pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be heard, Psal. 32. 5, 6.* If our Lusts be strong and prevalent, by Prayer we may have them weakened. If our Graces be weak and infirm, by Prayer we may have them strengthened, *2 Cor. 12. 8, 9.* What shall I say? There

is no Evil whatsoever which we either feel or fear, but by Prayer it may be removed, no Good whatsoever which we either want or desire, but by Prayer it may be obtained. Yea, so powerful and prevalent is Prayer, duly performed, with Almighty God himself, that he cannot, at least he will not, deny us any thing that we sincerely pray for, having a Promise from him, *Ask and ye shall have*, Matt. 7. 7. Infomuch that when *Israel* had sinned in Making and Worshipping the Molten Calf, and God was ready to destroy them for it, *Moses* stepped in, and interceded for them, and prayed him to divert his Wrath from them; whereupon God said unto him, *Let me alone, that my Wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them*, Ex. 32. 10. *Let me alone*: a strange Expression! intimating as if he could not do it as long as *Moses* prayed so earnestly for the contrary; as if he could not strike them so long as *Moses* prayed him to hold; as if Prayer could tie the Arms of Omnipotence itself; and yet this is no more than what our Saviour himself intimates in the Parable of the Unjust Judge, who could not but at length hearken to the Petition of the importunate Widow, *Luke* 18. 1, 2, 3. so great is the power and efficacy of devout Prayer, for the obtaining of whatsoever good Things we sincerely desire at the hands of Almighty God.

And shall I need now to use any more Arguments to perswade you to the constant and sincere performance of this Duty, which is no less effectual with God than it is acceptrble unto him? Or do you now think it possible to gain so much in an Hour's time by your Trades, or in your Shops, as you may do by Praying? surely you cannot think it. And therefore I shall say no more, hoping that you all understand yourselves, and what you have heard, better than to live any longer in the neglect of this Duty, which if you do, the Papists will
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rise up in Judgment against you ; for they punctually observe each Day their Hours of Prayer, according to their manner of Devotions. The *Turks* will rise up in Judgment against you, for they constantly pray five times a Day, and besides their private Devotions, they reckon them little better than Atheists that are not once or twice a Week at least in their Mosches or Temples. The *Pagans* will rise up in Judgment against you ; for though they knew not the true God, they constantly prayed to such as they thought to be so. And therefore have a care of yourselves, and as you excel all these in Knowledge, so be sure to excel them in Practice too ; and do not only pray oftner than heretofore, but endeavour to do it better too, both in Publick and Private, observing the Rules which I have now explained, that so *your Prayers may go up as a Memorial before God.*



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An Exhortation to the Love of God.

MATTH. XXII. 37.

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all
thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.*

LET me now bespeak your Affection for the Lord your God; not the Love you have for other Things, but a Love above all Things: Gather up your scattered Affections from all Things here below, and fix them upon him that made them: Put him not off any longer with overpowered Passions; but love him most, whom be sure you can never love too much; no, never fear Excess in your Love to God, which is capable of no other Extreme but only of Defect. In other Things Mediocrity is a virtue, but here it is a Vice: For we must love him exceedingly, or we cannot love him truly; so that the only Measure of our loving him, is to love him without Measure: And therefore he that thinks he loves God enough, doth not love him at all. In Creature-Comforts our Affections may grow excessive, and our Love exorbitant, but the transcendent Perfections that reside in God, render him so incapable of being loved too much, that the highest Passions that we can raise up to him, are still infinitely below what he deserves

serves from us. No, take it for a certain Truth, you can never love the World too little, nor God too much. Our Love to other things is like other Rivers, the best when it keeps within its bounds; but our Love to God is like the River *Nilus* in *Egypt*, most welcome when it overflows. Bridle therefore your Passions to the Creatures, but let them run loose to their Creator. Never fear loving him too much, seeing the highest of your Passions is no more than finite; whereas the lowest of his Perfections is no less than infinite: You can never love God more than you ought, and therefore love him as much as you can.

Where, when I say, you must always love him, I do not mean as if you should have some Love for him as well as for other Things, but that you should have more Love for him than all Things; for that is not accounted as Love to God, which is either surpassed or equalled with our Love to the Creatures: And therefore whensoever you hear me mention *loving of God*, you must still apprehend me speaking of such a Love to him as exceeds and out-strips our Love to all Things besides; for we love God no more, than we love him more than all Things else. He that loves God no more than other Things, loves the other Things more than God; for he hath no love for God at all, because he doth not love him above all. For I say again, we have no more Love for him, than we have more Love for him than other things. So long as our Love is matched or over-topped with our Love to other Things, we may love the other Things, but we do not love God; but the least degree of our Love to God more than to all Things else, makes it to be true and acceptable Love to him. Some may love God many Degrees beyond all Things else, others few; and so one Man may have more Love to God than another; but he that loveth him never a De-
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gree beyond all Things else, he hath no love for him at all. And therefore I say again, when you hear me advising you *to love God*, I would have you all along remember, I mean only such a Love to him, as surmounts and exceeds your Affections to all things in the World besides. This is the Love that God requires of us, and this is the Love that we owe to God. This therefore is the Love that I counsel you all, as you will answer it at the dreadful Day of Judgment, to fix upon the Great God. It is too too long already that you have loved other Things more than God; now for Shame begin to love God more than all other Things.

O! therefore, that I knew what Words to take unto my self, that whilst I am speaking, this sacred Fire may kindle in all your Souls, that you may no longer commit Sacrilege, in robbing God of that which he hath commanded you to appropriate to himself. I know your Affections are so glued to the World, that it is not in the Power of Man to rend them thence, much less is it within the reach of human Strength to raise them up from Earth to Heaven, and from Sin to God. But I know also it is by such Counsels, Commands and Exhortations to you, that God is pleased to work this and all other Graces in you: It is by his Ministers that he useth to strike this sacred Fire out of our flinty Hearts. To raise up therefore your Affections to the most high God, give me leave to present some Motives to you, and the Lord of his infinite Mercy be pleased to work them upon you, that whilst you hear the Voice of your Fellow-Creature sounding in your Ears, you may feel the Power of your Great Creator reaching to your Hearts, wrenching your Affections from all Things here below, and mounting them up unto himself above.

Well then: What Motives shall I use to prevail upon you? Verily, my Brethren, whilst I consider
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what Considerations to lay before you, to blow up your Affections unto God, there are so many crowd themselves into my busy Thoughts, to be presented unto yours, that I scarce know where to begin; and when I have begun, I fear I shall scarce know where to end. I cannot look upon you, as being in this Place, but I must tell you, you are bound to love the Great God for it; for had not he loved you, you would not have been in God's House, but the Devil's Dungeon at this very Moment; and certainly his Love to you, may well deserve your Love to him. Nay, I cannot send mine Eye any Way, but it still brings me in new Motives to love God. If I look above me, there are the Heavens that he hath made for our future Happiness; that beneath me there is the Earth he hath made for our present Abode; if about me, there are the Creatures he hath made for our Use and Comfort, all calling upon us to love That God that made them. Nay, verily, my very calling upon you to love God, is a Mercy for which you are bound to love him; and the more I call upon you to love him, the more are you bound to love him, for my calling upon you. Nay, to speak plainly, if there be ever a Soul in the Congregation that loves God, let me tell thee, thou art bound to love him more for thy loving him at all; so that not only his Love to thee, but thy Love to him, should stir up in thee still greater Affections for him; for assure thy self thou art infinitely engaged to him for thy loving of him, as well as for his loving of thee; for had not he first loved thee, thou couldst never have loved him.

Thus, I say, I can fix mine Eyes upon nothing but it supplies me with fresh Motives to love God. But for my more orderly presenting them unto your Thoughts, I shall digest them all into two Heads, endeavouring to raise up your Affections unto God, from the Consideration,

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1st, Of the Properties of that Love we ought to have for God.

2^{dly} Of the Perfections of that God we ought to love.

1st. From the Properties of the Love we owe to God. And certainly did we but know what it was to love God experimentally, as well as notionally, we should find there is greater Happiness to be enjoyed in the Performance of this one Duty, than in all the Enjoyments that this World can afford us. Give me leave to shew you some of the rare Properties of this Divine Love.

1. It is the first and the great Commandment, *Matth. 22. 38.*

1. It is the first Commandment.

First in Order, for this is the first of all the Ten Commandments, *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me*, *Exod. 20. 3.* Which is as much as if he should have said, *Thou shalt love nothing as God before me, worship nothing as God before me, serve nothing as God before me; nay, thou shalt not so much as have any other Gods before me.* Whereas it is plain, that he that loves any thing more than God, or doth not love God more than all Things, he hath, and loveth, other Gods before *Jehovah*. For whatsoever a Man loves, and prefers before other Things, that is his God. Thus a voluptuous Person is said *to make his Belly his God*, *Phil. 3. 19.* because he minds his Belly before all Things else. And therefore is Covetousness called *Idolatry*, *Col. 3. 5.* because the Covetous Man minds and loves his Riches more than all Things else. And the reason is, Because it is to God only to whom we owe the choicest of our Affections. And therefore whatsoever we love most, to that we give what is proper and peculiar to the true God. And so tho' it be not a God in itself, yet we make it one in our Esteem. And therefore every one that loves

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any Thing more than *Jehovah*, hath other God's before him. Know ye then of a certainty, that every Soul amongst you that loves any Thing more than God, or doth not love God more than all Things, is a cursed Idolater. Thou worshippest a false, instead of a true God. Dost thou therefore love Riches more than God? It is the Mammon of Unrighteousness that is thy God. Is it Pleasures thou lovest more than God? Then Pleasures are thy God. Is it an Husband or Wife thou lovest more than God? Then it is thy Husband or Wife that is thy God. Is it thy Children, thy Liberty, thy Health, thy Credit, thy Sins, thy Life that thou lovest more than the Great God? These, these are thy Gods, these are the Deities thou worshippest. Wonder no longer at the *Persians* for adoring the Sun; wonder not at the *Indians* for worshipping Sticks and Stones; wonder not at the *Americans* for falling down to Satan, nor at the *Papists* for bowing to Images; but wonder, Oh! wonder at thyself, that worshippest thyself, and lovest thine own Concernments before the Great God. Oh, my Brethren! that you would bethink yourselves what gross and cursed Idolaters you all are, so long as you love any Thing more than God. It is Love that is the principal Worship of the God of Heaven, and this you give to the Toys on Earth. Oh consider with yourselves! What, love Pleasures more than God? Honours more than God? Riches more than God? Relations more than God? Liberty more than God? Life, or any Thing more than God? Thou shameful Idolater, call thyself no longer a Christian, lay aside thy Professions, pretend not to be a Worshipper of the True God, so long as thou worshippest so many false ones before him. Oh cursed Apostacy! that we who give up our Names in Baptism unto God; would now give our Souls to the Devil, our Love to the World, our Affections to Sin; who

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instead of turning with the *Thessalonians*, from Idols unto God, *1 Thess. 1. 9.* turn with the *Indians* from God to Idols; instead of leaving the World to cleave to God, we leave God to cleave to the World. Give me leave to use the Apostle's Exhortation, now I am preaching to you Christians, as well as if I was preaching to the Idolatrous Heathens; *Brethren, keep your selves from Idols, 1 John 5. 21.* Oh! keep yourselves from Idols, from Idol-Riches, from Idol-Honours, from Idol-Lusts, from Idol-Self: Oh! turn from these and all other Idols, to serve the Living and True God. Remember it is the first Command, *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me:* Which, in effect, is as much as to say, Thou shalt love nothing more than me.

Secondly in Dignity, as it hath the first Place, so hath it the best Being for its immediate Object. In the other Commands some of them respect God's Name, others his Worship, others his Sabbaths, others his People, but this respects his Person; and therefore it is the most proper and peculiar Worship that we can perform unto him. And therefore, as ever you desire not only to forsake your false Gods, but to worship the true one, you must love him above all Things, all other Worship is but in reference unto this, and signifies nothing at all without it. It is true, Praying, and Reading, and Hearing, and Receiving of the Sacrament, and the like, are all Parts of God's Worship; but alas! this is only the Body, it is Love to God that is the Soul of Worship: And these external Performances before God, are no further any true Worship of him, than as they have respect unto, and terminate in true Love unto him; which indeed is the End of all Ordinances. Why do you pray, but that you may love God? Why hear, but to love God? Why receive the Sacrament, but to love God more? It is the Love of God that is the great End of all these Duties

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ties, and therefore it is the most proper and immediate Worship that we can perform to God. And therefore St. *Augustine*, speaking of these Words, in his Tenth Book, *de Civitate Dei*, saith, *In quo quid aliud mandatur, nisi ut ei quantum potest commendat diligendum Deum? Hic est Dei Cultus, hæc vestra Religio; hæc recta Pietas, hæc tantum Deo debita Servitus:* 'What is here commanded but to love God? This 'is the Worship of God, this is true Religion, this 'is right Piety, this is the Service due only unto 'God. And therefore ye in vain pretend to be Religious, or to worship the True God, unless you love him above all Things. This is the Worship that he requireth from you, and this is the Worship that you owe to him; do this, and then you serve the True God; leave this undone, and do what you will besides, you are still Idolaters; for it is first.

Thirdly in Performance. A Man can perform no other Command, until he first perform this; thou canst not Pray, nor Read, nor Hear, nor give Alms, thou canst do nothing as thou oughtest to do, unless thou first lovest God; for there is nothing Good, but what proceeds from Love to the chiefest Good; nothing is accepted by God, but what is grounded upon Love to him. Thou may'st Pray thy Tongue, and Hear thy Ears to the very Stumps; thou may'st Fast thy Body into a Skeleton, and make thy Couch to swim continually in thy Tears; thou may'st bestow thy Estate wholly upon the Poor, and give thy Body to be burned; thou may'st live like an Angel, and die like a Serpent; yet let me tell thee, without Love to God it all signifies nothing: Thy Tears will be all rejected, thy Prayers slighted, thy Alms despised, and all thy Performances disregarded, as Things nothing worth, unless they proceed from Love to God; and therefore, saith the Apostle, *If I speak with the Tongues of Men*
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and Angels, and have not Charity, &c. 1 Cor. 13. 1. What Charity doth he speak of? Certainly Love or Charity to God, and for God's sake to Men; without this thou may'st fill the Air with Sighs, the Heavens with Groans, the Sea with Tears, and yet find no Favour or Acceptance in the sight of God: No, thou must first love him above all Things, before thou canst do any thing pleasing to him; not only because all the Duties to him cannot be equivalent to the one horrid Sin thou committeſt againſt him, in loving other Things before him, but alſo because it is this Love to God only that performs all other Duties; without which God will never ſmell a ſweet Savour from them. What therefore tho' thou prayeſt? What tho' thou readeſt? What tho' thou heareſt? What tho' thou comeſt to Church? What tho' thou performeſt all other Duties unto God? if thou omitteſt this, thou haſt as good do nothing. For there is not a Duty thou performeſt without this, that there is any thing of Good, but a great deal of Evil in it. Oh! therefore, as ever you deſire to do any thing pleaſing unto God, you muſt firſt love him above all Things. There is not the greateſt Duty, but without this will certainly be rejected; and there is not the leaſt, but with it will certainly be accepted.

2. It is the greateſt too, as well as the firſt Commandment. For,

1. It is that to which all the reſt tend. This is, as it were, the Sea, into which the other Commands, as the leſſer Rivers, do all empty themſelves. Not as if, in reſpect of the Lawgiver, one is greater than another, for the ſame God commanded them all; but becauſe all the reſt are but as it were ſo many Branches of this: So that there is not any of the reſt but tend to the Advancement of this. And therefore we cannot perform any other Commands aright, unleſs our Eye be fix'd upon this.

2dly,

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2dly. It is that under which the rest are all contained; so that a Man that doth not love God, can do nothing; whilst he that doth love God, doth all Things that are required of him; for as the Apostle saith, *All the Law*, to wit, of the second Table, *is fulfilled in one Word, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*, Gal. 5. 14. So we may well say, all, both Law and Gospel, is fulfilled in this one Word, *Thou shalt love the Lord above thyself, and all things else*: So that he that doth not perform this one Command, cannot perform the other; but he that performeth this, cannot but perform the rest.

3dly. It is that in which they all end. Praying, and Hearing, and Repenting; Faith, and Hope, and Sorrow; yea, all the other Commands will end with us, and so resolve themselves into this one which shall never end; for *Charity never faileth*, 1 Cor. 13. 8. And therefore it is said, v. 13. *And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity*: Because this is that in which the other are contained, and this is that which will continue when the other are all ceased.

2dly. Consider, that love to God will make all other Duties easy. To him that doth not love God, the easiest Duty is difficult; to him that doth love him, the difficultest Duty is easy. For Love is of that Quality, that it makes us divest ourselves of our former selfishness, and to be inconsiderate of our own Concernments, in Comparison of his we love. How do enflamed Lovers lay aside the Thoughts of Health, of Quiet, Liberty, Life, and any Thing for the Enjoyment, and pleasing of the Party they love. It is so in Temporals, and certainly then much more in Spirituals. If thy Heart be set upon God, thou wilt think nothing too great for him, no Duty too great to undertake, no Misery too heavy to undergo, for him whom thy Soul loveth. Thus the 'Spouse in the *Canticles*, her Soul being en-

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flamed with Love to Christ, she forgets her Rest, her Sleep, her Ease, her Quiet, to find him she loved; *she sought him upon her Bed, in the Streets, in the broad Way, every where to find him, Cant. 3. 1, 2, 3.* And so thou, if thou dost indeed love God wilt count all things as Loss, and Dross, and Dung in Comparison of him. Friends, Relations, Estate, Preferments, Health, Strength, Liberty, Life, thou wilt look upon these things, as not worthy to come into Competition with God. And therefore thou wilt not baulk the least Duty imaginable for the Attainment of the highest Glory conceivable. What is the Reason you are so loath to pray, loath to hear, loath to read the Scriptures, loath to give Alms, loath to repent, and loath to perform other Duties? And what is the reason you are so backward to these Duties, and those Duties are so hard to you? Why the Reason is, because you do not love God. If you loved him, it would not be your Trouble, but your Joy to come before him. Thus David; *I rejoiced when they said unto me, Let us go up to the House of the Lord, Psal. 122. Yea, a Day in thy Courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a Doorkeeper in the House of my God, than to dwell in the Tents of Wickedness, Psal. 84. 10.* Thus will it be with thee, though perhaps now that thou hast no Love, but rather Hatred for God, thou thinkest it tedious and irksome to pray and hear, and sit so long in the House of God; but let me tell thee, if ever God be pleased to raise up thy Affections to himself, the hardest Duty will be as easy as ever the easiest Duty was hard unto thee; thou wilt take as much, yea more Delight in drawing nigh to God, than ever thou didst in running from him. And therefore if ever thou wouldest have the Paths of Wisdom pleasant, the Ways of Holiness delightful to thee, thou must endeavour to get thy Heart emptied of its Love to Sin, which

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as yet it is filled with, and filled with the Love of God, of which as yet it is empty.

3^{dly}. If thou lovest God, *all things shall work together for thy Good*, Rom. 8. 28. So long as thou lovest any Thing more than God, there is not the best of thy seeming Goods but are real Evils to thee: Whereas if thou lovest him above all Things, there is not the worst of thy seeming Evils but shall be real Goods unto thee. Oh, then who would love any Thing more than God! to have his very Mercies turn'd into Miseries? Who would not love God more than all Things, to have his very Misceries turned into Mercies?

4^{thly}. It is the Work of Angels, and the Happiness of Heaven. This is that Crown of Glory we all expect to have set upon our Heads, when we arrive at our Father's Kingdom: Gold and Silver there is none, but Joy and Love to God. Oh, how shall our Hearts be transported with it! And certainly, for all the low Conceits that you and I may have of true Love to God, certainly the Angels and glorified Saints find it to be the richest Treasure in all their Kingdoms. So that if you love God, you may antedate Heaven, and bring down those Joys to you, before God takes you up to them.

5^{thly}. Love to God is the best Evidence of our Title to the Crown of Glory. If there be any Flaw or Defect in your Love to God, all your other Evidences will be of no Force; but if thy Love to God be true and cordial, thou hast as sure a Title to the Joys of Heaven, as thou hast to thy Estate upon Earth; and thou hast never an Evidence can more firmly prove thy Interest in what thou hast here, than true Love to God will evidence thy Title to what thou hopest for hereafter. For if thy Love to God be true Love, thy other Graces are all true Graces; thy Repentance is true Repentance, thy Faith true Faith, thy Humility true Humility;

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and if thy Graces be true on Earth, thy Glory must needs be great in Heaven. And therefore if you would know whether you have any Title to Heaven, consider what Love you have to God on Earth. And assure thyself, when thou and I shall be summoned at the Grand Assize to bring in our Evidences for the Kingdom of Heaven, whatsoever other Evidences we bring, unless we bring this, even Love to God above all Things, the rest will all signify nothing. This one Evidence is enough without all other; and all other are nothing without this.

6thly. Love God truly above all Things here, and thou shalt enjoy all things perfectly in God hereafter, *1 Cor. 2. 9.* Let him have the principal Room in thy Heart on Earth, and thou shalt have a principal Room in his House in Heaven. Let thy Heart be wholly set upon him in Time, and thy Soul shall be certainly blessed in him to Eternity. Oh! therefore, as ever you desire to be lifted up to the height of Happiness, rather than thrown down into the Depth of Misery, when ye die, love nothing more than God, but God more than all Things whilst you live.

Secondly, From the Perfections of that God whom we ought to love, now there are two Things, you know, in a Person, which draw our Affections to him.

1st. His Love to us.

2dly. His Loveliness in himself.

And certainly, if you and I could fix our Contemplations upon the infinite Expressions of God's Love to us, and the infinite Perfections of his Loveliness in himself, we should be as unable to keep off our Affections from him, as we are now unable to draw them, and raise them up to him. Well, give me leave to be your Remembrancer this Evening, of what God hath done for you, and of what

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what he is in himself; and that after all that I shall say, you are still resolved to love yourselves, your Health, your Wealth, your Sins, your Lusts, your Life, or any Thing more than God. For my part, I shall almost despair of ever being an Instrument of Good to your Souls more. For if such Considerations as these are, even of what God is in himself, and of what he hath been to you, will not prevail upon you to leave doting upon Toys, and to *love the Lord your God with all your Hearts*, for my part I know not what others can. Well then,

1st, Consider God's Love to you, or how much you are engaged to him for what he hath done for you. But before I make a further Progress into this Consideration, it will be first necessary to remove a Stumbling-block which lies in our Way. For, may some of you say, have you not taught us all along, that we must love God more than all Things? Whereas if we love him only for what he hath done for us, we shall love ourselves more than him. For by this Means our Eye being fixed principally upon ourselves, we should mind ourselves only, and him no further than as he is beneficial to us, not at all as he is transcendently glorious in himself; and so our Affections being so mercenary and selfish, they cannot possibly be filial and sincere. And how can it be lawful for us thus to eye ourselves more than him, or him only in respect to ourselves?

To this I answer,

1st, We must distinguish betwixt the Occasion, and Scope of our Love, that which first draws my Love to him, and that which afterwards fixeth my Love upon him. I do not say, this is the great Reason why we ought to love God; for certainly he infinitely more deserves our Love for what he is in himself, than for what he is to us. For the Expressions of his Love to us are but finite, whereas
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the Perfections of his Loveliness in himself are infinite. But howsoever, I may make use of this Consideration, as a Motive to stir up your Love to him. And certainly, tho' the principal Reason why we should love God, is, because he is so infinitely good in himself, yet the principal Motive of our Love to him, is the Consideration of what continual Goodness he hath shewn to us. For we are more sensible of those Streams of Goodness that flow from him, than of the Fountain of Goodness that is in him. We cannot see how good he is in himself, but we daily see how good he is to us; and it is our Eye principally that affects our Hearts: So that, tho' we are to love him principally for what he is in himself, yet the best Means to raise up our Affections, so as to love him for what he is in himself, is the Consideration of the manifold Expressions of his Love to us.

2dly. The Scripture doth give us sufficient Warrant to love him for what he doth for us, as well as for what he is in himself, tho' we are still principally to love him, for what he is in himself, rather than for what he is to us.

Give me leave to instance in these three or four Places:

1st. *I love the Lord, because he hath heard the Voice of my Prayers*, Psal. 116. 1. This was the reason why he loved God's Person, because God had heard his Prayer.

2dly. *We love him, because he first loved us*, 1 John 4. 19. not only we love him, because he deserves Love from us; but we love him, because he first loved us. Therefore, because he loves us, therefore we do love him; and therefore the Consideration of his Love to us is one Reason of our Love to him.

3dly. *Her Sins be forgiven therefore she loved much*, Luke 7. 47. For, tho' we read, indeed, *For she loved*

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loved much, yet the other seems to be the truer Exposition of them. For the *Greek* Word *ἐν*, will well bear that Sense, and the Scope of the Place will scarce admit of any other; for our Saviour is here giving the Reason why *Mary* had expressed so much Love to him, even because he had expressed so much Love to her, in the forgiving of her Sins. He did not therefore forgive her her many Sins, because she loved much; but therefore she loved much, because he had forgiven her so many Sins. And indeed the Antithesis in the same Verse requires this Interpretation, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little; which Antithesis plainly implies the foregoing Thesis to be, He to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much, not, He that loveth much, to the same much is forgiven. And indeed the Analogy of Faith requires it too; for God doth not pardon our Sins because we love him, but rather we love him because he pardons our Sins. But,

4thly. That we may love God for his Goodness to us, is plain from the Words of my Text too, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart*; so that we are not only to love him as he is the Lord, but as he is our God; *Thou shalt love the Lord*, that implies that we must love him for what he is in himself; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*, that denotes that we are to love him for what he is to us.

Well then; seeing we may love the Lord for what he hath done for us, let us a little consider with ourselves what he hath done for us, for which we should thus love him. And whilst I shall speak of the Love of God, let your Hearts be enflamed with Love to him. As one Candle lights another, so let the Flames of Love in God to you, light the like Flames of Love in you to him. Consider,

1st, It was God that raised thee out of Nothing; had he not made thee thou hadst not been. Alas!
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from all Eternity thou wast Nothing, and hadst been so still, had not he caused thee to spring up like a tender Bud, testifying from whence thou camest, and upon whom thou dependest, by thy Inability to help thyself. Had not he raised thee out of the Bed of Nothing, thou hadst, to this Moment, lain sleeping in it, not knowing any, nor known by any; and what should move God to put forth his Everlasting Arms, and bring thee out of this barren Womb? Was it because thou lovedst him? Poor Creature! Thou who wast not, how couldst thou love? Or, if thou hadst loved any Thing, certainly nothing less than him, who was infinitely contrary, yea, contradictory to thine Eternal Nothingness. Yet, tho' thou couldst not love him, yet he could, and did love thee; yea, he so loved thee that hadst no Being, that he gave thee a Being, wherein to love himself: A Being, I say, not that of Plants or Brutes, but he endowed thee with a rational Soul, upon the Face whereof he stamped his own Image, giving thee an Understanding whereby to know him, a Will whereby to chuse him, Affections whereby to love him, that gave them all unto thee. So that, as if he had not made thee thou couldst have been Nothing; so unless he had enabled thee, thou couldst never have loved any thing. It was he that gave thee that very Affection of Love, which thou now ungratefully placest upon other Things more than him. Had not he given thee that Passion, thou couldst not have loved any thing. How much then art thou bound to love God more than every thing, seeing without him thou couldst have loved nothing. Oh then remember God loved you before you was, do you love God now you are; and seeing he so loved you as to give you Beings; do you so love him as to improve your Beings for him.

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2dly. As he raised you out of Nothing, so it is he that still keeps you in your Beings. It was he alone that did create you; and it is he alone that can preserve you. So that thou art as unable to keep thyself from falling down from thy Being unto Nothing now, as thou wast to raise thyself from Nothing unto a Being before. As he made all Things by the Power of his Word, so it is he that *upholds all things by the Word of his Power*, Heb. 1. 3. Had not he put his Everlasting Arms under thee, thou hadst never risen up from Nothing; and should he take away his Everlasting Arms from thee, thou wouldst again fall down to Nothing. So that every Moment of thy Life is a Monument of his Love. Neither is it he only that uphold'st thee, but it is he that continues all the Faculties of thy Soul, and Members of thy Body. It is he by whom thou knowest any thing, by whom thou willest any thing, by whom thou desirest any thing, by whom thou enjoyest any thing, and by whom thou lovest any thing. Thou couldst have had nothing to love, unless he had given it thee, neither couldst thou love it now thou hast it, unless he enabled thee. Oh! then how infinitely art thou engaged to love him above all Things, without whom thou couldst neither have any thing to love, nor love any thing thou hast; without whom neither thou that lovest it, nor the Thing thou lovest, could continue one Moment in its Being.

3dly. As it is he that preserves you in your Beings, so it is he that protects you from Evil; without him thou couldst not but fall down to Nothing; and without him all Evil would fall down upon thee. It is he alone who gives good Things to thee; and it is he alone who withholdeth Evils from thee. Oh! how many unseen Dangers doth he continually keep us from? How often had that roaring Lion, the Devil, before now devoured us,

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had not the Lion of the Tribe of *Judah* rescued us? How oft have we been upon the brink of Ruin; but that it was God that kept us from falling in. How art thou engaged to God for every good Thing thou hast, and for every evil Thing thou hast not? It is of his Mercy that thou art preserved, and it is of his Mercy that thou art not consumed. Unless he had loved thee more than thou lovest him, there is nothing that is Good, but would have been kept from thee; there is nothing that is Evil, but would have been thrown upon thee. It is only from him that thou art here, and not upon thy sick Bed; here, and not in Prison; yea here, and not in Hell. Neither is it he only that defends thee from Temporal, but from Spiritual Evils; for without God, as there is no Misery but would fall upon thee, so there is no Sin but thou wouldst fall into. Art thou not a Murderer? Art thou not an Adulterer? Art thou not a Drunkard? Art thou not a Thief? Yea, art thou not a Blasphemer? Art thou not an Atheist? Not to thyself, not to thyself, but to the Name of God give the Praise and Glory. For as it's only God's constraining Grace that enableth thee to do the Good thou dost; so it is only God's restraining Grace that prevents thee from doing the Evil thou dost not. And therefore thou art bound to love God both for what thou art, and for what thou art not; for what thou dost, and for what thou dost not.

4thly. It is he also that directs thee in all thy Ways, and prospers thee in thy Undertakings. *It is not in Man that walketh to direct his Steps, Jer. 10. 23.* No, it is God only that directs our Steps for us. When thou art in Doubts and Perplexities, and knowest not which way to take, it is God that is a Voice behind thee, saying, *This is the Way, walk in it.* It is he that enlightens thy Understanding, quickens thy Apprehensions, and directs thy Thoughts, ordering

dering the Spirits in thy Brain, that those may occur which are most advantageous and beneficial. If thou beest Rich, it was he that directed thee to the Means thou wert to use, and then prospered thee in the using of them. And whatsoever thy Condition now be, the whole Chain of Causes, and Series of Providences, that hath brought thee from thy Mother's Womb unto what thou art, was ranged and managed only by his Almighty Power. So that thou art nothing, thou dost nothing, thou hast nothing, but what thou art beholden for. Is it by thy Labour and Industry that thou hast gotten thy Estate? Who was it that made thee thus laborious and industrious, but God? Is it by thy Gifts and Parts that thou art advanced to Preferments? Who was it that gave thee those Gifts and Parts, but God? Hast thou great Friends, and many Lovers in the World? Who was it that made them thy Friends and Lovers, but God? It was he that gave *Joseph* Favour in the Sight of the Keeper of the Prison, *Gen.* 39. 21. It was he that brought *Daniel* into Favour, and Love, with the Prince of the Eunuchs, *Dan.* 1. 9. So that as without him we could not love others; so without him others would not love us. And therefore, the more others love thee, the more art thou bound to love God.

5^{thly}. As if all this was nothing, God to manifest himself still further to thee, came down from his blessed Throne, cloathed himself with Flesh, became subject to his own Creatures, yea, and unto Death itself, and all to redeem thee from it. Oh glorious Condescension! Oh ravishing Expression of Divine Love! that Eternity should stoop to Time, Heaven come down to Earth, Glory be wrap'd in Misery; that God himself should become Man, and all to reconcile Man to himself! *Oh what is Man that thou should'st be thus mindful of*

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*him, or the Son of Man that thou shouldst be thus merciful to him! Who are we, or what was our Father's House, that God himself should not only become Man, but suffer for us and undergo Cruelties, Reproaches and Stripes, from those that could not lay them upon him, did not he at the same time enable them! That he should be condemned by such, as could not pronounce the Sentence against him, did not himself vouchsafe them Breath to do it! Yea, that he should suffer Death from them that borrowed their Lives from him! Oh how can you think of these Things and keep your Hearts within your Breasts! How are we able to consider how much God hath done for us, and not burn in Love to him! Oh ye that love yourselves, your Sins, your Lusts, your Friends, your Lives, or any Thing more than God, behold the Most High himself mocked, despised, spit upon, crowned with Thorns, drinking Gall and Vinegar, and last of all undergoing the Pangs of Death, and all to redeem you to the Joys of Love! Consider, I say, these Things, and then tell me, whether he doth not infinitely deserve your Love, more than the Things that have it. Consider that he assumed thy Nature, that thou mightest partake of his, he became the Son of Man, that thou mightest become the Son of God; he hungred, that he might feed thee with his own Flesh, and thirsted, that he might give thee to drink of his own Blood; he was apprehended that thou mightest be secure, derided, that thou mightest be honoured, condemned, that thou mightest be absolved, and crowned with Thorns here, that thou mightest be crowned with Glory hereafter. He came from Heaven to Earth, that thou mightest go from Earth to Heaven. Yea, *he that knew no Sin was made Sin for us, that we that know nothing but Sin, might be made the Righteousness of God in him.* He, who was innocent, was punished*

nished, that thou, who art guilty, mightest be pardoned. He was crucified, that thou mightest be glorified. He who had lived in Heaven from Eternity, came and died on Earth in Time, that we, who die on Earth in Time, might go and live in Heaven to Eternity. Oh! how canst thou muse of these Things, and the Fire not burn within thee? Where is thy Heart that thou dost not throw it, all on Flames with Love, at the Foot of that God, that hath done so much for thee?

6thly. He did not only come down once to die for thee, but he is still pleased to come down and live within thee. He did not only assume our Humane, but we partake of his Divine Nature. And if it be an Honour for the King to remove a Subject to his Court, what an Honour is it to remove his Court to his Subject? If it be an Honour, for God to take us up to live with him; Oh what an Honour is it, for him to come down and live in us! Yet this Honour have all his Saints. *Know ye not, saith the Apostle, that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you, 1 Cor. 3. 16.* Oh what Expression of Love can you desire more from God, or God bestow more on you? But tell me, my Brethren, seeing he that inhabits Eternity, vouchsafeth also to come and dwell in you, what can you do less than receive him into the uppermost Corner of your Hearts, and entertain him with the choicest of your Affections? Seeing he is pleased to live in you, how can you forbear loving of him!

7thly. Consider further what God hath laid up for you in Heaven, as well as what he hath vouchsafed to you on Earth. His Mercies upon Earth are infinitely more than you do deserve; but the Glory he hath prepared for you in Heaven, is infinitely greater than you can imagine. *For Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of*
Man

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Man to conceive the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him, 1 Cor. 2. 9. So that the Delights of Heaven, shall not only be greater than we as yet enjoy, but higher than we as yet can fancy; and therefore expect not that I should describe them to you. For was I able to describe them, they would be infinitely less than they are; no, all that I can tell you of them is, that they are greater than I am able to tell you of. Only this we know, that those Joys of Heaven will as much transcend our Expectations, as the Pleasures upon Earth deceive them. For there certainly we shall have infinitely more than we can here desire; yea, there we shall enjoy more Happiness than here we are capable of; for our Capacities shall there be enlarged as well as filled. So that we shall be capable of enjoying more, as well as enjoy as much as we are capable of. Oh, my Brethren, you that, like Worms, are still creeping and crawling upon the Earth, conversing with nothing but Dust and Clay, you little think of the Joys that they are transported with, who are admitted into the Court of Heaven, and made Partakers of those transcendent Glories. You little think what it is to see God Face to Face, and to bath yourselves in those Rivers of Pleasure, which are at his Right Hand for evermore. Would the Great God be pleased to open you a Casement into this glorious Palace, and give your Souls but the least Glimpse of these ravishing delightful Glories, I dare say thou wouldst be a thousand times more desirous of Heaven, than ever thou wast of any thing upon Earth. Thou wouldst even melt away into Holy Longings, and Thirstings, and Pantings after those Things, which as yet thou slightest and disregardest. And verily, for all the low undervaluing Thoughts you have as yet of Heaven, so as to prefer the seeming Pleasures upon Earth before it, assure yourselves, if God shall be
ever

ever pleased to bring you to it, you will be of another Mind. Nay, let me tell you, you must be of another Mind before you are ever likely to come there. Much more when you shall once be possess'd of the actual Enjoyment of those transcendent Glories, which I am as unable to express, as desirous to enjoy, you'll then think the highest of your Affections infinitely too low for that God, who hath provided such Mansions for you.

8thly. If thy frozen Heart be not as yet dissolved into Love and Affection to the Great God, for these wonderful Expressions of his Love to thee; consider his Ends in all these Things. Alas! he aims at nothing in all this for himself, but all for thee. It is he only that does the Work, but it is we only that receive the Gains. For before the World, or any Part of it, had a Being, God was brim-full of Glory, infinitely happy in the Enjoyment of himself, being all Joy and Bliss, all Honour and Glory, yea, all Things desirable to himself. So that before he had made his Creatures, he stood in no need of them; and now he hath made them, he is never the better for them. He was infinitely happy in himself before, and cannot be more happy in us now. Neither did he make Creatures out of any such Design, to be any thing advanced in his Happiness by them, or to receive any Accessions of Glory from them; but meerly out of his own essential Goodness, which is naturally communicative of itself, even as the Sun is naturally diffusive of its Light, tho' he get nothing by it. And therefore, whether thou beest damned he is not the worse, or whether thou beest saved, he is never the better for it. But howsoever, out of his own intrinsical Goodness he hath made thee; and upon the same account is desirous to make thee happy. And if thou acceptest of the Overtures of Grace he makes thee, it is thou that receivest the Happiness,

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Happiness, not he. It is true, he is the good Husbandman that breaks up the fallow Ground of thy Heart, and sows the Seed of Grace in it : It is he also that waters, and weeds, and dresseth it, and causeth it to spring up and flourish ; but when all is done, it is thou only that reapest and receivest the whole Crop of Glory from it. And therefore, thou must not think, that he hath any Ends in loving thee ; he only loves thee, because he loves thee, *Deut. 7. 8.* And now that he calls upon thee to love him, it is not because he wants thy Love, but because thyself wantest it. For it is no addition to his Glory, but it is the Perfection of thine to love him with all thy Heart. Oh ! how art thou able to consider these Things, and not be forced to cry out with the 'Spouse in the *Canticles*, *Stay me with Flagons, comfort me with Apples, for I am sick of Love, Can. 2. 5.*

2dly. Neither doth God only deserve your Love, because he hath been so loving unto you, but especially because he is infinitely lovely in himself. And certainly, tho' God doth give us leave to love him for these astonishing Instances of his Goodness to us, yet he requires us especially to love him for that bottomless Ocean of Goodness that is in himself. And, verily, for all the low Apprehensions that we may have of the Eternal Deity, did it but please the most High God to open our Eyes, and shew us that Glory that shines round about us at this Time, how should we all lie grovling in the Dust before him, and our Souls be melted into holy Desires and Pantings after him ?

When the *Syrians* came to *Dothan*, the Servant of the Prophet *Elisha* could see nothing but the Chariots, and Horses, and Hosts of the *Syrians* : But when God had opened his Eyes, *Behold the Mountain was full of Horses and Chariots of Fire round about Elisha, 2 Kings 6. 17.* So here, you look about

you

you from Place to Place, but can see nothing but your Fellow Creatures about you. But if God would be pleased but to open your Eyes, as he did the Servant of *Elisha*, *Behold the Place is full of Horses and Chariots of Fire*; yea, it is full of the Glory of the Great God; whom if we could but see, how would our Hearts be even snatched from us, and our Souls transported wholly into Flames of Love? And tho' these Ravishments of Love from the sight of God, may seem Paradoxes and Mysteries to deluded Mortals; yet certainly could you and I but look upon this glorious Object, with the same Eyes wherewith *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, *Peter*, and *Paul*, and the rest of the Celestial Hierarchy, do continually, and at this very Moment, behold him, how should we all be raised beyond our former selves? How should we immediately throw our melted, ravished, enflamed Hearts at the Feet of such transcendant Glory? Certainly, did we thus behold him, we should be as much unable to keep off our Affections from him, as now we are to draw them up unto him; and it would be as impossible as it is unjust, to let any thing come into Competition with him.

I know you expect I should speak something in particular, in the Praise of those amazing, and enamouring Perfections that are in God, which thus deserve the choicest of our Affections from us. But, verily, you must excuse me; for I am conscious to myself, that my highest Celebrations of them would be but as so many Detractions from them. Only let me tell you this in general, if ever it shall please this, the Chiefest Good, to discover himself unto you, and display his Glory before you, you'll find him to be the Source of Wisdom, the Abyss of Goodness, the Rule of Holiness, the very Center of all Perfections; one who doth not only possess infinite Perfections, but one in whom every Perfection

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fection is infinite; one so amiable, so desirable, so pure, so perfect, so altogether lovely, that had we no Relation to him, had we received no Expressions of Love from him, yet his bare Essence, his native Excellencies, could not but make us ravished and enamoured with him; one so altogether lovely, that the glorified Angels, from the beginning of the World to this Moment, could see nothing, either in or out of him, to lessen their Affections to him. Yea, one whom to behold, and love, and praise, will be our Happiness for evermore; and therefore one whom, though thou shouldest sift and rack thy Brains to Eternity, to find out some Exceptions against him, or some Excuse for thy withholding thy Affections from him, it would be impossible.

And therefore be it known unto you, that every Soul amongst you that doth not love God above all Things, therefore does it not, because he doth not know him. For as thou canst not love him, unless thou knowest him, thou couldst not but love him if thou knowedst him. Let not the deceitful World then cheat thee any longer of thy Affections; but let him be the Center, who was the Author of them. Dote no longer upon these childish Gewgaws, but fix thy Love upon the Chiefest Good. And seeing he hath called for thy Heart from thee, what canst thou do but throw it before him all open, all melted, all on fire with Love unto himself, without keeping back the least Spark of Love to any Thing else, but only in Subordination unto him. Raise up therefore thy Affections to him, and fix thy Love continually upon him, never give over heaving at thy Heart, until thou hast gotten it up to him, who so infinitely deserves the choicest of thy Affections, not only for those Expressions of Love which he hath shewn to thee; but for those Attractives of Love which are all concentrated in himself.

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